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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 MINSK 001225

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT POLLING REPORTS INCREASE IN INDEPENDENT RADIO
AUDIENCE

REF: A) MINSK 1117

Summary

1. Independent Belarusian pollster Manaev November 21 gave Ambassador the results of his sixth and final post election survey. According to his results, both the amount of Belarusians who listen to foreign radio broadcasts and who use the internet continue to increase. Support ratings decreased somewhat for Lukashenko, but remained much higher than Milinkevich's ratings, which also declined. Opposition parties and the Protestant Church remain the least trusted institutions in civil society whereas the Orthodox Church, the President, and the Army command the greatest trust. As local council elections approach, more Belarusians plan to vote than did in the 2003 local council elections, although they favor pro-Lukashenko candidates over opposition candidates. Respondents prefer a union with Russia over integration in the EU, but the number of those supporting EU integration increased. The majority of respondents disapprove of any union with Venezuela, Iran, and China. End summary.

2. Independent polling service (IISEPS) director Oleg Manaev presented Ambassador the sixth and final opinion polls conducted in November (septel). IISEPS interviewed 1527 people. The margin of error was 3%.

Independent Radio Slowly Gaining an Audience

3. IISEPS' November survey showed that the number of people who listen to independent radio broadcasts from abroad increased by 9.7% between April and November. Internet usage also increased by four percent since April. Manaev explained to Ambassador that compared to polls conducted in Russia (which he did not present), Belarusians were taking the lead in internet usage. In April, only 25% of respondents indicated that they used the internet. By November, that percentage increased to 29.2%:

"Not long ago, new radio stations in Europe began to broadcast (in Russian and Belarusian) to Belarus. Do you listen to these broadcasts?"

YES

April November

European Radio, Belarus (Warsaw)	3.7%	6.2
Radio Raciya (Biallystok)	1.9	4.5
Polonia (Warsaw)	3.1	4.5
Belaruski Khroniki-German Wave (Bonn)	2.4	4.0
Baltic Wave (Vilnius)	1.0	2.6

"Do you use the internet?"

	April	November
Yes, daily	4.7%	6.3
Yes, several times per week	8.8	7.7
Yes, several times per month	7.7	11.1
Yes, several times per year	3.8	4.1
No	70.1	65.1
No, I do not know what that is	3.9	5.5

14. Russian and Belarusian TV remains popular among Belarusians and an increasing number of respondents trust Belarusian programs notorious for their propaganda and anti-West rhetoric:

"What TV channels do you watch?"

	February	November
Russian TV (ORT, RTR, NTV)	80.2%	85.7
Belarusian TV (BT, ONT, STV)	88.3	89.0
Local TV	25.6	40.8
Cable TV	32.7	40.3
Satellite TV	16.2	18.4
Polish TV	10.9	11.6
Russian service Euronews	19.5	19.1
Weekly RTVI (for Belarus)	5.7	6.8

"Do you trust the analytic programs on Belarusian TV (Postscriptum, Konturi, Zhyostki Razgovor)?"

	February	November
Yes	27.6%	36.2
Indifferent	46.9	36.4
No	24.7	17.5

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Milinkevich Ratings Continue to Decline

15. Similar to IISEPS' August survey results (ref B), Lukashenko received the majority of votes in the March presidential elections and Milinkevich received approximately 20%. However, Milinkevich's ratings continue to decline while Lukashenko's ratings remain relatively constant.

"Whom did you vote for in the 2006 presidential elections?"

	March	April	June	August	November
Lukashenko	64.9%	63.1	61.9	55.5	52.7
Milinkevich	21.4	18.8	19.9	20.4	14.8
Kozulin	5.0	7.3	5.9	4.8	4.0
Gaidukevich	2.2	5.2	3.3	3.0	4.0

"If elections were tomorrow, whom would you vote for?"

	April	June	August	November
Lukashenko	60.3%	54.3	55.5	49.7
Milinkevich	18.4	13.6	11.6	10.3
Kozulin	3.7	3.7	3.2	3.5

"Name a Belarusian politician or civil society activist on the national level who conveys your interests the most." (no more than three answers per respondent)

Lukashenko	37.5%
Milinkevich	10.7
Kozulin	5.7
Sidorsky (PM)	4.5
Gaidukevich	3.1

"Do you know a candidate who could successfully compete against Lukashenko in the next presidential elections?"

No 80.5%
Yes 17.6

Where Do Belarusians' Support Lie?

16. According to IISEPS, 47.8% of respondents support the government, whereas 18.5% consider themselves opponents. However, 26.2% of those polled did not know whether they supported the GOB or not. When asked, most respondents indicated that they trust most the Orthodox Church, the President, and the army and opposition parties and the Protestant Church the least:

"Do you trust the following government and social institutions?"

	Yes	No	No Answer
Orthodox Church	65.8%	18.5	15.7
President	60.3	26.0	13.7
Army	58.6	28.6	12.8
Constitutional Court	52.3	30.4	17.3
State media	53.8	33.6	12.6
Courts	50.4	35.5	14.1
Government	49.0	35.7	15.3
Prosecutors	48.3	35.1	16.6
Government survey services	43.9	34.8	21.3
Human rights organizations	38.4	29.6	32.0
Central Election Committee	44.0	38.9	17.1
KGB	44.1	39.6	16.3
Independent survey services	37.4	35.9	26.7
Independent trade unions	37.7	38.6	23.7
Police	42.8	44.5	12.7
Catholic Church	36.8	40.1	23.1
Government trade unions	36.1	39.8	24.1
Local executive authorities	39.6	44.3	16.1
Local Council deputies	38.5	44.3	17.2
Pro-government political parties	35.6	42.9	21.5
Independent media	37.7	45.1	17.2
United entrepreneurs	32.4	40.4	27.2
Opposition political parties	21.4	57.5	21.1
Protestant Church	17.2	56.8	26.0

"What does the opposition need to do in order to gain greater support from the population?" (respondents allowed three answers)

Be honest and fair	26.8%
Work better	25.2

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Elevate the standard of living	23.7
Change their methods of fighting	22.5
Consult the people	20.8
Opposition needs to unite	16.8
Have accessible programs	15.7
Not capable to do anything	13.7
No need for opposition	13.5
No answer	9.5

"After the presidential elections on March 19 the democratic forces initiated various acts of protest in Minsk and other cities in Belarus. Which one of the acts did you know about?" (more than one answer possible)

October Square protests in Minsk, March 19-24	66.8%
Chernobyl March, April 26	30.0
Day of Will, March 25	25.0
Jeans Fest, September 16	14.4
Other acts	0.8
I know nothing about these acts	24.4

"How do you feel about these acts?"

Positively	19.5%
Indifferent	29.3

Negatively	41.2
No answer	10.0

Citizens Approve of Current Situation

17. An increasing number of respondents believe that Belarus is moving in the right direction and has finally become a true independent state. However, many Belarusians could not answer as to whether Belarus' "progress" and independence had improved or worsened their lives.

"In your opinion, are things in Belarus developing in the right or wrong direction?"

	February	November
Right direction	58.4%	61.6
Wrong direction	28.1	24.0
No answer	13.4	14.4

"In the last 15 years has Belarus become a true independent state?"

Yes	68.8%
No	20.5
No answer	10.7

"Did you personally win or lose as a result of Belarus' independence?"

Win	49.8%
Lose	15.6
No answer	34.6

"How will Belarus' social-economic situation change in the coming years?"

	August	November
Improve	40.8(%)	42.5
No change	36.2	37.7
Worsen	12.0	10.7

"In your opinion, what would be the consequences on your family and the country as a whole if the price of gas increased?"

Heating and service costs and the price of products would drastically increase, and would worsen my family and country's standing	34.9%
Heating and service costs and the price of products would begin to increase, and would somewhat worsen my family and country's standing	23.9
The country's leadership would find a solution to this problem and will have no consequences on my family or country	36.0

Local Council Elections

18. Local council elections are scheduled for January 14, 2007. According to IISEPS' polling, 65.7% of respondents plan to vote in January, a 7.6% increase in participation since the 2003 local council elections. Seventy percent of respondents could not

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identify people who would be appropriate candidates, but most would choose a pro-Lukashenko candidate over an opposition party member:

"What type of candidate would you vote for in the upcoming elections?"

A pro-Lukashenko candidate	49.6%
An anti-Lukashenko candidate	18.6
Not for any candidate	12.5
No answer	19.3

"If you wanted to vote for a candidate from a political party, then which one?"

Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Kozulin)	7.2%
Women's party "Nadzyeya" (Eskova)	7.2
Liberal Democratic Party (Gaidukevich and pro-GOB)	6.2
Belarusian Green Party (Gromiko)	4.6
Belarusian Party of Communists (Kalyakin)	3.9
United Civic Party (Lebedko)	3.9
Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Gramada" (Shushkevich)	3.1
Conservative Christian Party Belarusian National Front	2.7
Belarusian National Front (Vyachorka)	2.5
Another party	1.7
None of these	31.1
No answer	25.9

¶9. Although only 18.6% of respondents would vote for an opposition candidate, the majority of those polled believe that opposition members should be included in election commissions and election observation:

"Do you think that the election commissions should include representatives of all political parties, including the opposition?"

Yes	64.8%
No	24.5

"Do you think that representatives from all political parties, including the opposition, should be able to observe the election process at polling stations?"

Yes	67.8%
No	22.8"

¶10. However, few respondents believe local councils play an active role in citizens' lives:

To what extent do local councils and their deputies influence your life?"

Greatly influence	18.4%
Somewhat influence	37.1
Do not influence	36.5

"In your opinion, should local councils' authority be increased?"

Yes	34.0%
No	43.8
No answer	22.2

The Russian Union Question

¶11. "How would you vote if a referendum was held today on the uniting of Belarus and Russia?"

	February	November
For	43.3%	46.0
Against	33.2	33.5
Would not participate	13.8	10.6
No answer	9.9	9.9

"It is possible that soon in Belarus and Russia a referendum will be held on the Constitutional Act which would open the path to closer integration between the two states. How would you vote?"

	April	November
For	48.2%	38.4
Against	28.3	21.4
Will not participate	10.4	8.1
Depends on the circumstances	----	27.1
No answer	----	5.0

"One opinion is that if Belarus and Russia unite into one state, Belarusians would be able to participate in the Russian presidential elections in 2008. If this happened, for who would you vote?"

For Lukashenko	46.0%
For Putin	16.7
Neither	26.5
No answer	10.8

"What do you think about Lukashenko's statement made during a recent press conference for Russian journalists: "If tanks moved from there (i.e. from West) towards Russia, we would die for Russia. Our people should be ready for this."?

Do not accept nor support this statement	51.4%
I accept and support this statement	25.9
I do not care	10.8
No answer	11.9

"Not long ago Georgian authorities accused several Russian officers of espionage. In response, Russia organized a blockade against Georgia. In your opinion, is it possible that Russia would use similar methods against Belarus if a conflict arose between our countries, i.e. gas prices?"

Possible	39.8%
Not possible	45.8
No answer	14.4

Warmer Respo.se to EU, But Colder for Outposts of Tyranny

¶12. Belarusians' attitude towards the EU changed considerably since February. IISEPS' result showed that those for Belarus' integration with the EU increased 8.3% since February and those against decreased 6.5%:

"If a referendum were held tomorrow on Belarus' admission to the EU, how would you vote?"

	February	November
For	27.7%	36.0
Against	42.7	36.2
Would not participate	16.4	15.5
No answer	13.2	12.3

¶13. Approximately 27 percent of respondents know the European Commission (EC) is threatening to suspend the General System of Preferences (GSP) from Belarus. Manaev noted to Ambassador the significance of the public's knowledge of the GSP, because it showed that they were aware of the situation despite the lack of reporting in the state media.

¶14. Belarusians showed different attitudes to countries that Lukashenko has publicly called Belarus' closest allies. According to IISEPS' polling, 52.9% of those surveyed do not want Belarus to form any union with countries such as Venezuela, Iran, and China. 58.3% of respondents believe that they are much closer to Americans and Europeans than citizens of China, Iran, and Venezuela.

Comment

¶15. IISEPS' survey revealed that Belarusians have grown somewhat more wary of Lukashenko. Although 49% of respondents would vote for Lukashenko if elections were held tomorrow, only 38% feel that he represents their interests. However, most Belarusians still have not found a person, especially within the opposition, who they feel is capable of taking Lukashenko's place; over one-third are even confident that Lukashenko can make adjustments in the event that Russia raises energy prices. Thus, as before, the Belarusian

opposition has much terrain to cover before it can take advantage of the small but growing discontent in the country.

STEWART